



CREATING A VETERAN-FRIENDLY



EMPLOYER RESOURCE GROUP

The steps and benefits for Michigan employers.



Dear Michigan Employer,

Michigan is a top place for veterans to live, work and raise a family. Our state offers diverse career opportunities, robust veteran benefits, and some of the most beautiful sights and adventures in the country. And to better support veterans and attract top talent to the Mitten State, employers can do their part in building veteran-friendly workplaces.

Over 550,000 veterans currently call Michigan home. There are more than 550 certified Veteran-Friendly Employers across the state, and that number continues to grow. A top tactic in creating a veteran-friendly workplace (and in achieving Gold-Level status from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency) is establishing a Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Group, or VFERG.

VFERGs have proven success for both you as an employer, and most importantly, for your team and veteran talent. The groups provide a valuable support network for veterans, raise awareness and promote understanding of the issues veterans face, enhance camaraderie and teamwork, and offer leadership and visibility opportunities for veterans in the workplace.

Because many veterans actively seek out employers who are committed to supporting them and their unique needs, establishing a VFERG can enhance both your recruitment and retention tactics. VFERGs also support an organization's greater Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts and social mission.

At the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA), we are committed to supporting veterans as they transition to civilian life and work. We believe creating Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups is a critical step in achieving this goal. As always, we are here to offer guidance as you work toward implementing a VFERG at your organization, and we thank you for your support.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Hollier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Adam Hollier, Director
Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency

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Special thanks to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) for its support. The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity provides the connections, expertise and innovative solutions to drive continued business growth, build vibrant communities, create affordable housing, generate tourism, and attract and retain key talent to fill Michigan’s vast pipeline of opportunities.



“Since the start of our Meijer Team Member Resource Group, mVets, **we’ve identified hundreds of armed service veterans, members, and allies**, so they too can feel engaged, supported and empowered at Meijer. mVets is exceptional in spreading the word about veteran-related events, issues, and other opportunities, including welcoming new team members, and we’re thrilled with its continued growth and support.”



Jeremiah Hernandez
*mVets Co-Lead and Lansing
Meijer Store Director*

“The Michigan Department of Corrections’ Military Advisory Committee and our facility Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups provide a network that supports our employees who are veterans or those still serving, along with military family members and retirees. Bringing together our unique backgrounds of military service has allowed us to **cultivate professional and personal relationships similar to the camaraderie we all experienced while in uniform**. These groups have also given us a platform to promote changes and provide greater opportunities for the military and veteran employees that will come after us.”



Emily Rissman
*Veteran Liaison Specialist,
Michigan Department of
Corrections*



Establishing a VFERG is one of the most critical steps you can take in earning Gold-Level distinction.



What are Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups (VFERGs)?

There are over 550,000 veterans living in Michigan. As these military service members transition to or advance in the civilian workforce, Michigan businesses can offer support through Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups.

Similar to other groups for like-minded individuals within an organization, veteran-specific resource groups support the veteran talent on your team. The groups:

- ★ Function as a collaborative, supportive subgroup within a company.
- ★ Foster safe and welcoming environments.
- ★ Help veterans grow, engage, and demonstrate their leadership skills in the workplace.
- ★ Have buy-in from senior leadership.
- ★ Promote DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) efforts.
- ★ Reap countless benefits for both employees and employers.

The MVAA is here to help your business establish an effective Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Group. This guide will walk you through the key steps and structures that will set you up for success.

Have questions along the way? We're here to help.
Visit **[Michigan.gov/VeteranFriendlyEmployers](https://michigan.gov/VeteranFriendlyEmployers)** or
email us at **mvastrategy@michigan.gov**.

Hiring a veteran makes good business sense.

If you're looking for a hardworking, motivated, ethical employee, hire a veteran. As many Michigan employers have learned, veterans can be adaptive team players with real leadership experience who know how to triumph over adversity. Veterans have learned to work side by side with others regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and religious and economic status. They show respect for procedures and health and safety standards. Hiring veterans is not only a good idea... it's good business.



There are over 550 certified Veteran-Friendly Employers in Michigan.



Benefits for Employees

Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups provide a wealth of benefits for employees who have served in the military. These groups offer a safe and supportive environment for veterans to connect with others who have shared experiences and can understand their unique needs. They also provide:

- ★ Support and guidance in the transition from military to civilian life.
- ★ Access to resources and information about veteran-specific benefits and services.
- ★ The platform to advocate for veterans' issues and additional areas of need.
- ★ Career development training.
- ★ Mentorship and networking opportunities.
- ★ Camaraderie amongst like-minded individuals and those eager to learn.
- ★ Increased visibility within one's organization.
- ★ An opportunity to exhibit leadership in the civilian workplace.
- ★ And more.



Benefits for Employers

Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups (VFERGs) foster more engaged, motivated and productive workforces... which can have a positive impact on your organization and bottom line. Simply put, resource groups make good social and business sense. That's why hundreds of Michigan businesses have already implemented them.

Ready to take the first step? Here are five essential ways a VFERG can support your organization:



It's a recruitment tool for top talent.

Companies with existing veteran resource groups stand out amongst potential job candidates. These groups show dedication to and appreciation for veterans and the unique skillset they bring to the workforce.



It supports your organization's DEI efforts.

VFERGs demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which has become increasingly important to consumers and stakeholders. They also raise awareness of the unique challenges veterans may face, which can lead to more inclusive policies and practices to support veteran needs.



It's a critical step in becoming a Gold-Level Veteran-Friendly Employer.

There are over 550 certified Veteran-Friendly Employers across Michigan. By committing to veteran recruitment, training and retention, the MVAA has awarded these employers Gold-, Silver- or Bronze-Level status. For employers looking to earn a Gold-Level distinction, starting a VFERG is one of the most effective and critical steps you can take.



It boosts morale and employee retention.

Engaging veteran employees in this collaborative forum can boost career satisfaction and overall retention rate. When you invest in a VFERG now, you're investing in your team's job satisfaction and future. In turn, this step can save you time, money, and job searches down the road.



It builds internal and external reputation.

Employees like working with companies who care... and so do clients, customers, and other organizations. Implementing veteran and other employee resource groups speaks volumes about your dedication to your team and community.



Appointing Leadership

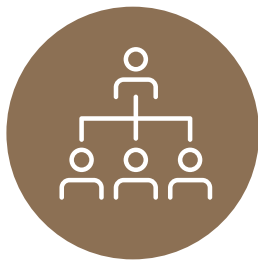
Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Groups select leadership in top-down or bottom-up approaches, depending on how they operate and their intended impact.

Top-down

Here, an organization's management or HR department initiates a VFERG based on employee or organizational interest. They open a nomination/application process, and senior leadership appoints leadership from the pool of candidates for the VFERG. Additional roles are filled in from the pipeline and membership grows, top down.

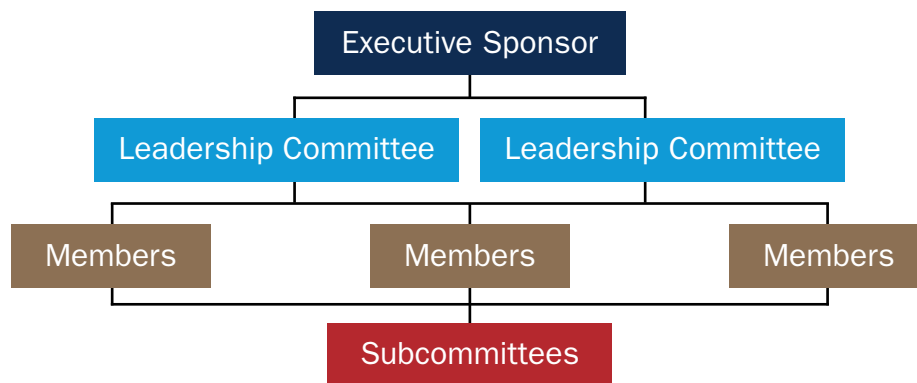
Bottom-up

In this equally effective approach, employees take steps to organize the VFERG. Employees nominate leadership internally based on individuals' qualifications and strengths. Members assume responsibility in selecting leadership roles, defining the VFERG's mission, and securing approval from the organization at large.



Identifying Roles

Every VFERG will look different, but the following outline provides one example of a resource group's organizational structure with key tiers.



Executive Sponsor

This is the main figurehead of the group who acts as a liaison between the VFERG and your organization's senior leadership. They are mentors who guide the group in determining its mission, initiatives, goals and future, and secure additional support as needed.

Leadership Committee

The second tier of leadership, this level embodies the values of the organization. They are responsible for attending the majority of meetings and will help run meetings, grow the group, and reach goals.

Members

The membership base will continue to ebb and grow as your VFERG expands. It will include veteran employees at your organization, individuals with veteran relations, and those interested in supporting veterans internally and externally. Members should regularly provide feedback and contribute to meetings and activities.

Subcommittees

For organizing events, marketing your VFERG, raising funds, and additional efforts, many VFERGs elect to create subcommittees to spearhead specific tasks.



Creating your VFERG

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- ▶ **Identify interested veterans, allies,** Guard or Reserve members, spouses, family members, advocates, and other parties within your organization.
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- ▶ **Write a business plan and outline.** What are the main goals of the group? Are there subgoals you're hoping to achieve? Do your goals also tie into your organization's business goals?
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- ▶ **Solicit sponsorship and approval** from necessary higher-ups. This may include human resources and senior leadership.
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- ▶ **Write mission and vision statements** and establish bylaws for members.
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- ▶ **Determine leadership within the VFERG.** Every group will look different, but we've provided a helpful outline on page 11.
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- ▶ **Compile a list of veteran resources** and information for ongoing member support.
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- ▶ **Select a meeting schedule and medium of communication,** whether that's email, social media, newsletter, etc.
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- ▶ **Establish outreach strategies** and engagement events.
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- ▶ **Meet regularly** and promote your organization to grow it further into the future.
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Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Group Checklist

Check off key steps as you work from inception to implementation of your veteran resource group.

Research and Plan

- ☐ Gather interested members to start planning.
 - ☐ Research other employee resource groups at your organization, paying special attention to how they received approval and how their group is structured.
 - ☐ Create a mission and vision.
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Establish Logistics

- ☐ Develop a business plan with clear goals and strategies.
 - ☐ Define an organizational structure and identify leadership.
 - ☐ Schedule ongoing meetings.
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Spread the Word

- ☐ Establish a form of communication (email, social media, newsletter).
 - ☐ Create a communication plan to promote the VFERG to your organization.
 - ☐ Solicit sponsorship from senior leadership or HR.
 - ☐ Network with other employee resource groups.
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Secure Funding

- ☐ Look at existing groups within your organization to inform funding.
 - ☐ Prepare and submit budget requests.
 - ☐ Identify additional opportunities to raise funds.
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Continue Growing

- ☐ Encourage regular feedback from members.
 - ☐ Define and track success.
 - ☐ Report success to the group and organization at large.
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To learn more or get help forming your Veteran-Friendly Employer Resource Group, contact the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency.

Visit **Michigan.gov/VeteranFriendlyEmployers** or email us at **mvaastrategy@michigan.gov**.



**SCAN WITH YOUR
CAMERA APP TO
LEARN MORE.**

The **Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA)** is the central coordinating agency for Michigan veterans and their families. MVAA connects veterans to benefits and resources as they transition through each chapter of their lives, including education and employment resources, VA health care and disability benefits, and emergency assistance for food, utilities, rent, home, and vehicle repairs.

Call MVAA at **1-800-MICH-VET** (1-800-642-4838) or visit **Michigan.gov/MVAA**. As a state agency, all MVAA services are free.